

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN  
MARCH 2007 EDITION**

**SEGMENT: BLOOD LAB**

**JIM BENSON, HOST:** SCOTT WALLACE REPORTS FROM TUCSON, ARIZONA – WHERE A NEW AUTOMATED LABORATORY POINTS THE WAY TOWARD THE FUTURE OF DIAGNOSTIC TESTING.

**SCOTT WALLACE, REPORTER:** BLOOD – IT'S THE VERY ESSENCE OF LIFE FLOWING THROUGH OUR VEINS. IT'S ALSO THE GREATEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION WHEN IT COMES TO DIAGNOSING ILLNESS.

**NURSE:** THERE YOU GO. YOU WANT TO PUT YOUR FINGER HERE FOR ME PLEASE?

**WALLACE:** EACH BLOOD SAMPLE MUST BE TREATED WITH CARE TO GET THE PROPER ANALYSIS. EVERY PATIENT'S TREATMENT – AND POSSIBLY EVEN LIFE -- DEPENDS ON IT.

**RON B. SCHIFMAN, MD, CHIEF OF DIAGNOSTICS, TUCSON VAMC:**  
IF YOU CAN IMAGINE HUNDREDS OF SAMPLES EACH DAY COMING INTO THIS LABORATORY.

**WALLACE:** AND WITH THAT MANY SAMPLES, THE VA MEDICAL CENTER IN TUCSON HAS INSTALLED THIS FULLY AUTOMATED SYSTEM FOR HANDLING, TESTING AND KEEPING TRACK OF HUMAN BLOOD. IT'S THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN A VA HEALTH CARE FACILITY.

**SCHIFMAN:** IN THIS NEXT PHASE, THE SAMPLE GOES OVER HERE TO THE CENTRIFUGE AND THOSE SAMPLES THAT HAVE TO BE DECAPPED ARE PUT IN THIS MODULE.

**WALLACE:** KNOWN BY ITS TRADEMARK NAME – THE ENGEN – THIS FINNISH-MADE LAB CARRIES A PRICE TAG OF ONE MILLION DOLLARS. IT'S A COMPLEX SYSTEM OF COMPUTER-GUIDED ROBOTICS, CONVEYORS AND SWITCHES, ALL WORKING TOGETHER WITH MIND-BOGGLING ACCURACY. THIS AUTOMATED LAB ENHANCES SAFETY FOR BOTH WORKERS AND PATIENTS. IT REDUCES THE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO PATHOGENS AND THE RISK OF A SAMPLE BEING MISPLACED.

**SCHIFMAN:** OUR TECHNOLOGISTS NOW HAVE MORE TIME TO INTERACT WITH OUR PHYSICIANS. THEY NOT SPENDING TIME ON THE REPETITIVE TASKS OF PREPARING THEM FOR TESTING.

**WALLACE:** ONCE THE SAMPLES ARE LOADED INTO THE SYSTEM, THE ROBOTICS DO THE REST – ALL THE WAY TO THE VERY END WHEN THE SPECIMENS ARE REMOVED FOR STORAGE.

**LAB TECHNICIAN, SPEAKING TO DOCTOR:** BECAUSE OF THE CRITICAL VALUE HERE, AS A TECH I'LL TAKE THE SITE LOCATION...

**WALLACE:** THE LAB PERFORMS MORE THAN 45 DIFFERENT TESTS – FROM BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS TO HIV DETECTION. IN ALL, MORE THAN ONE MILLION INDIVIDUAL TESTS IN THE PAST YEAR.

**SCHIFMAN:** WE'RE HELPING IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF OUR PHYSICIANS AND PROVIDERS TO TAKE THE BEST CARE OF PATIENTS AND ULTIMATELY, THE OUTCOME HAS BEEN MUCH BETTER CARE – NOT ONLY FOR OUR PATIENTS BUT FOR OUR STAFF.

**BENSON:** THE ENGEN AUTOMATED LAB HAS BEEN UP AND RUNNING FOR A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AND IT CONDUCTS 500 TESTS EACH AND EVERY DAY. STAFF PRODUCTIVITY IN THE LAB HAS INCREASED BY MORE THAN 100 PERCENT.

**END OF VIDEO**